

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Event With United Auto Workers Members in Warren, Michigan

February 1, 2024

The President. Well, thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Supporting you is the easiest thing I've ever done. *[Laughter]* Not a joke.

I was raised on GM. *[Laughter]* My dad managed a dealership—didn't own it; managed it. And in Delaware, we used to have the highest percentage of auto workers of any State in the Nation because we're a small State. We had the largest GM facility and the largest Chrysler facility outside of Detroit. And we—that's how we got through school. That's how we all made it.

But look, folks, I'm going to be brief because I know you have been doing a lot of work here. First of all, thank you, thank you, thank you.

You know, that old expression in a little town I grew up in in Delaware called Claymont, Delaware: You all are the ones that "brung me to the dance." *[Laughter]* And I never left you. I never left you.

To me, it's a basic, basic thing. And I mean this sincerely. You know, Wall Street didn't build the middle class. Labor built the middle class. And the middle class built the country. Really.

And when labor does well, everybody does well. No, no, I'm not just saying it. I know I'm the most pro-union, you know—anyway. *[Laughter]* We won't go into all that.

But the reason I say it is true. I asked the Treasury Department to do a study on the impact of unions on wealth and society. The single biggest reason why we have—unions are growing, the single biggest reason why the economy is growing, because you are the best workers in the world. That's not hyperbole. No, you really are. You really are.

And when labor does well, everybody does better. You even got nonunion shops a raise. *[Laughter]* They owe you. They owe you.

Folks, look, this is—I'll—I'm going to go on a little—just a little bit more. *[Laughter]*

There used to be a theory called trickle-down economics.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, I mean it. Democrat and Republican Presidents adhered to it for a long time. It was that if the wealthy do very well, the whole economy will grow, and it will all trickle down. Well, not a whole hell of a lot ever trickled down on my dad's kitchen table. *[Laughter]* No, I'm serious. Not a joke.

And I've always believed, you give a—everybody an even shot at a job, they want to do it, they'll do it, and they'll do it well. And you are the best trained, you are the best workers in the world.

I'll give you one example. I was in—I was—I decided that I had to do something in the first year because remember all those computer chips weren't available for the cars? There was—well, I got in a plane, and against the advice of many, including some my own folks—I went to South Korea, and I met with Samsung, and I met with the President of South Korea. And I said, "Why don't you"—we used to have—we invented the damn chip. No, we did. We refined it. We used to

have 40 percent of those chips we made. I said, "Why don't you invest in America?" He said, "We're going to invest in America." Invested \$100 billion in America. Guess what? Excuse me—\$50 billion invested by these guys.

Well, I said, "Why are you coming to America, Samsung?" He said, "Two reasons: One"—I give you my word—"you have the best workers in the world." No, no, that's not a joke. The best in the world. "And secondly, it's the safest place in the world for me to make my investment."

And, folks, look, we now have—in large part because of you and organized labor—the strongest economy in the whole damn world. We do. We do. In the whole world.

Inflation is coming down. Jobs are growing. We created 800,000 manufacturing jobs. Remember they told us we were dead—manufacturing is dead in America and China was going to eat our lunch? Well, guess what, man? We don't taste that good. *[Laughter]*

So, look, folks, I really mean it. Thank you, thank you, thank you. And the whole country owes you. They really owe you.

And I tell you a guy I owe. I owe this guy named Shawn. He stood up—he gets it. No, no, no. He gets it. He—come here. Come here.

I really mean it. Because when we got all these numbers moving and we—and you guys endorsed me, he talked about a simple thing. He said, "This is about giving people a shot." That's all it is. It's just fairness, give people a shot. And that's what you do. That's what you do.

And besides, you built my '67 Corvette. *[Laughter]* My pride. Any of you ever watch "Jay Leno's Garage"?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. And watch me race on my '67 Corvette? It's only a 327/350. *[Laughter]* I tell you what, man, I got up to 130 miles an hour though. *[Laughter]* Secret Service doesn't like riding with me very much anymore. *[Laughter]*

Anyway. Thank you, thank you, thank you. And you're not only helping auto workers, you're helping every worker in the world. You really are. You're the best workers in the world. That's not hyperbole.

And I learned a long time ago—last comment I'll make—I've been doing this a long time. I know I only look like I'm 40, but I'm—*[laughter]*—right? *[Laughter]* Anyway, but—40 times two. *[Laughter]*

But the thing is that, you know, there is a provision in the law that was passed during Roosevelt's time about—the big fight was the—could unions organize then. That was a big issue. It not only said unions could organize; it said we should encourage the union movement. That's what it says, the law.

And it says one other thing. When a President of the United States is given money by the United States Congress to spend, whether it's on an aircraft carrier or a highway or any public event, they should do two things. One—this is what the law says—one, they should hire American workers. Two, they should use American products.

And you can make an exception. If you didn't have a worker for a particular job or a product—or the material, you could hire somebody out. But guess what? For the longest time, we didn't pay attention to it. I pay attention to it.

That's why we're growing. Made in America by Americans—that's why we're the best in the world. And you're the best.

Thank you, and God bless you all. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Oh, wait a minute. Come here, Gov. Come here, Gov.

Turn—did they turn the mike off? [*Inaudible*]

Governor Gretchen E. Whitmer of Michigan. No, it's on now. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm not going to turn the mike off when I've got the best Governor in the country standing next to me here.

Senator, come here. And a great Senator as well.

And a woman you'd never know before—she's very quiet. [*Laughter*] She never tells me her opinion bluntly, like: "Joe, get the hell over here quickly. Move." You know Debbie Dingell. She's a fighter for you all. She's a fighter for you.

Participant. [*Inaudible*]

The President. [*Laughter*] Your Lieutenant Governor—[*applause*]. If I get first pick for a team, he's my guy. And I don't—

Gov. Whitmer. The speaker of the House.

The President. I'm about to introduce the speaker. You think I'm a—[*laughter*]. I'd be scared to death not introducing this speaker. [*Laughter*]

He's my kind of guy. As I told him when I met him the first time, he looked like he can still play. [*Laughter*] I was a pretty—I was the runner up for the State championship football scoring when I was a kid. If I had this guy running in front of me, I could have been an All-American. [*Laughter*] Could have been an All-American. Anyway.

Thank you all very, very, very much.

Every time I'd walk out of my Grandfather Finnegan's house—we were a labor family in Scranton—

[*At this point, music began to play.*]

[*Inaudible*—he'd yell, "Joey, keep the faith." My grandmother would say, "No, Joey, spread it." Let's go spread the faith.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:41 p.m. at the Region 1 Union Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd.; President Yoon Suk Yeol of South Korea; Shawn Fain, president, United Auto Workers; Jay Leno, host, CNBC's "Jay Leno's Garage," who conducted an interview with the President that also featured a drag race against Michael Powell, son of the late former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, at the U.S. Secret Service's James J. Rowley Training Center in Laurel, MD, on August 26, 2022; Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II and speaker of the house of representatives Joseph A. Tate of Michigan; Sen. Gary C. Peters; and Rep. Deborah A. Dingell.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign event with United Auto Workers in Warren, MI.

Locations: Warren, MI.

Names: Dingell, Deborah A.; Fain, Shawn; Gilchrist, Garlin, II; Lee Jae-yong; Leno, Jay; Peters, Gary C.; Tate, Joseph A.; Whitmer, Gretchen E.; Yoon Suk Yeol.

Subjects: Automobile industry, strengthening efforts; Economic improvement; Inflation; Job creation and growth; Labor movement and organized labor; Manufacturing industry, domestic

investment; Michigan, Democratic Party event; Michigan, Governor; Michigan, Lieutenant Governor; Michigan, President's visit; Semiconductor manufacturing; South Korea, President; United Auto Workers (UAW).

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